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SOCIAL CONTROL. XII.

SOCIAL VALUATIONS.

I.

FROM the great and fruitful truth established by Lester F. Ward that human desires are the springs of conduct and the true causes of social phenomena it follows that a scientific control of man will be one that modifies his desires. And hence in all the modes of control I have described we do, in fact, see society in some way crossing, blocking, weakening, or supplementing these central forces of human life.

A desire, however, is not an original datum. It is necessary to distinguish impulsive and imitative desires from those which follow upon a judgment of approval. In the case of the appetites for food, drink, sex, and sleep, and the passions, such as love, envy, jealousy, and revenge, the impulse precedes any imputation of worth, or is, at least, proverbially uninfluenced by it. When one ventures to ascribe real worth to the objects of such desire, his estimate is so manifestly due to the radiance with which yearning invests its dear object that the pessimist may well be pardoned for denying it any validity.

Such desires arise as spontaneously as the sap mounts or the tree puts forth buds. But there are desires less insistent and imperious that wait upon rather than precede judgments of approval. The blind outward surging toward this or that is not the type of the pursuit of knowledge or æsthetic enjoyment or personal excellence. When not under the spur of the appetites and passions, man shows himself a reasonable being by directing his endeavors toward "goods," *i. e.*, objects which his judgment tells him are the causes of pleasure. With vision no longer dimmed by the mounting of hot desire, he selects *values* as the goal of his endeavor. In his reflective moments he

reviews the possible experiences that beckon to him and passes upon them various judgments of approval or disapproval, attaches to them different degrees of esteem. And as are these valuations, so will be his choices and conduct.¹

Now the ascendancy of the rational faculty and the growing habit of letting "I would" wait upon "I approve" gives society a new opening in its perpetual struggle with the anti-social nature of the individual. If it can get him to adopt its valuations of the goods of life, the problem of control will be considerably narrowed.

Civilization is not wholly the progress of the arts, the discovery of new and better ways of satisfying wants; it is also the evolution of wants in number and variety, and the shifting of the accent from type to type. Food, drink, shelter, sex make up the animal group of wants. To this are added in the higher mammals curiosity and the desire for play and for companionship. Early man begins to be urged on by love of colors, of ornament, of noise, of rhythmic action in unison (dancing), by desires for festivity, converse, collective excitement, and social esteem. In the historic period the scale of wants is gradually extended by the spread of new habits of pleasure — friendship and the higher forms of love, sympathetic pleasures, music, the delight of power, the charm of the beautiful, poetic and religious feeling, intellectual activity, the quest for truth, the thrill of the onlooker, cosmic emotion, and a multitude of others hard to name or classify. Now this development of wants has been hastened by a development of values largely due to the social factor. The visible evolution which results in the civilized man has not been a spontaneous ascent of the individual, but, in its later stages especially, has been assisted and presided over by society.

II.

How comes that mounting of desire that gives us moral civilization? How is it men come to spend themselves for excel-

¹ Most illuminating on this point is Professor Giddings (*Principles*, Bk. IV, chap. 3), to whose exposition I am much indebted.

lence or knowledge instead of for booty or for women? Shall we credit the ascent of Pisgah to the seers and poets, who, like Merlin, have caught the splendor of a new gleam, and beckoned the multitude to follow it? Was it Isaiah who enamored humanity of justice, Æschylus who charmed it with heroic duty, Dante who made purity precious, Petrarch who taught men how to love, Thomas a Kempis who made the spiritual life inviting, Goethe who gave self-culture supreme value? While these stand out as the authors of uplifts that really required the coöperation of many men greater and lesser, we can freely grant the rôle of invention and the worth of individual initiative in the slow mounting of the human spirit to finer joys and nobler aims. All honor to the men of insight and imagination who pioneered the race up from the bog of animal satisfactions! But apart from great men we can detect in *mere association* certain forces of uplift.

Human beings after they are associated do not glance coolly about them, survey deliberately the desire-awakening contents of existence, and choose each for himself at what goods he will level his endeavor. Their communication one with another begets reciprocal suggestion, exchange of ideas, transfusion of feelings. By the channels of intercourse there is set in circulation a mass of beliefs and desires, which, as they do not exist in any individual mind, might, without straining the metaphor, be termed the contents of the social mind. It is the shaping power of these which makes society the silent partner in nearly all the weighings and choosings of associated man.

If the desires and ideas thrown out and set circulating by Tom and Dick and Harry merely met and blended, the net result of social intercourse would be the lessening of individual differences and the emergence of types. In the social mind would be formed a composite photograph of each class of elements contributed by Tom, Dick, and Harry to the common stock; and in this image would the member of the group be fashioned.

But such is not the fact. There is at work here a principle of selection and survival which brings about a development in

the contents of the social mind, and consequently a development of individuals so far as they are influenced by the social mind. For instance, when groups hitherto aloof strike up intercourse, all manner of customs are put in circulation. The result is not a *potpourri*, but an all-round advance brought about by the dropping out of those forms of life most inconvenient and the spread of those most fit and commodious. Similarly, when many beliefs concerning anything are set afloat, the high death rate among them assures the triumph of those beliefs which for the time and place are *truest*. And every extension of intercourse permits a further beneficent selection. Here we glimpse the secret of the great historical cross-fertilizations of culture, Phœnicia with Egypt, Greece with the Orient, Israel with the Græco-Roman world, Christendom with the Moors.

Now what happens when men communicate to one another their desires and their valuations of the object of desire? What in such cases are the requisites of survival? Clearly not as with customs, *fitness*; for desires are neither fit nor unfit. Clearly not as with beliefs, *truth*; for desires are neither true nor untrue. Of course, intense desires prevail over weak ones, and the preferences of the superior man reverberate farther than the preferences of the mean man. Valuations, moreover, are judgments, and those which declare the real worth of the prizes of life improve thereby their chances of survival. But in this clash and contention the leading law of selection will be this: *The desires most egoistic and the valuations most menacing to the common welfare are suppressed; while a fillip is given to those desires and estimates that many may entertain in safety, e. g., desire for common enjoyment and esteem of collective or ideal goods.*

A practice is eliminated by refusal to imitate, a belief by refusal to accept. But a desire or valuation is eliminated chiefly by refusal to communicate. One may be inflamed by bestial lusts or judge life from the point of view of a Yahoo, but he refrains from deliberately inciting his neighbors in turn. People who live in glass houses will not extol stone-throwing; and we all live in glass houses. The libertine will not care to spread

an appetite that might ravage his own family. The buccaneer will deprecate wassail and women till snug harbor is reached. The thief will still strive to impress his fellows with the preciousness of class honor. The proposals men press upon one another are proposals for common enjoyment, and the pleasures they praise most are not those which sunder, but those which unite them. Brutal anti-social appraisals, therefore, like bad coins, are continually checked in circulation; while the valuations that many may hold in common receive currency, indorsement, and furtherance.

The values that we hear on every lip are, therefore, those that have passed through a certain sifting. They have run the social gauntlet. They do not come from the overlappings of private estimates as a price results from a thousand private valuations of buyers and sellers. They give us life as refracted in a social medium. It would not be too bold a metaphor to say that the social mind ruminating upon the appraisals cast into it arrives at certain valuations of human experience; and that these are *social* valuations, seeing they measure things from the standpoint of society and not from the standpoint of the individual. These collective appraisals of goods are ever in contact with private valuations, and are perpetually modified by them. So long as the "old Adam" rekindles in his descendants desires selfish or base, it is impossible for social valuations to rise clear of private judgments. But in any case their plane is higher, and so far as they influence man at all, they will draw him upward and fit him for society.

To this "spontaneous generation" of social values we must add the zeal of the *élite* of a people to press its desires, tastes, and moral opinions upon the rest. This is a factor by no means to be despised. According to one view the progress of a society in civilization resembles the trailing of an ill-organized procession along the street—quickstep at the front, but the rear straggling out indefinitely. That is to say, advance takes place by the inherent power of the superior practice, belief, or want to overcome the inferior, and so passes from man to man, from class

to class, from people to people. It is thus, for example, that the use of soap or underwear or forks or wedding journeys becomes common

But the fact is that the van of the procession is not content to be followed by who will and at such pace or interval as pleases him, but actively urges and forces the stragglers to close up ranks. In other words, the progress of a folk is not mere imitation of example, but partly response to insistent suggestion. In the classic world, it is true, the *élite* was fain to draw apart for the pursuit of its refined enjoyments and leave the rude multitude to its gross pleasures and brutal amusements. But such cleavage betrayed old race lines. The *élite* of Israel never stood so aloof; and Christianity was born with the imperishable instinct to impregnate the meanest man with its soul. At one time even the church seemed about to fall under the sway of an intellectual syndicate that echoed the sneer of Basilides: "I speak for one in a thousand, the rest are dogs and swine." But the democratic instincts of the church threw off the yoke of the gnostics, and the *élite* went on with the great missionary task of spreading their desires and valuations throughout society. For a thousand years a proselyting church sought to leave upon every man, even the nethermost slave and serf, the impress of its notions of life and conduct. Then secular culture became missionary and proselyting, and for three centuries we have seen it striving by means of education to imbue every human being with those tastes and views we term "civilized," or at least equip him with that knowledge of letters that shall put him *en rapport* with the *élite* of the race. Thus Prospero busies himself with the teaching of Caliban.

Let me be understood. It is not society that kindles strange longings or invents new pleasures, but individuals. Society can only await these Prometheans and spread broadcast the fire they have stolen from the gods. If a people can provide no *élite* to discover the ideal goods, the higher tastes do not develop. Where, as with Carthaginians or Turks, the initiatives are lacking in those desires, aspirations, interests, and pursuits which consti-

tute *civilization in the person*, the power of the society to influence the valuations of its members can avail but little.

To the influence of *conventionality* and the influence of the *élite* must be added the force of *tradition*. Whatever once dominates society acquires in time authority and prestige by reason of the dovetailing of generations into each other. The impersonal products of the past—institutions, beliefs, valuations—become semi-independent factors, working along with living men and women in shaping the life of the present. The natural ascendancy of the old over the young assures social valuations of vastly more power over the generation that receives them than they can ever gain over the generation that originates them. Becoming fixed in literary and artistic traditions, religious systems, moral theories, and worldly wisdom, they are skillfully brought to bear on the minds of the young in home and church and school and social life, till they become a staunch but unseen prop of the social order.

III.

Just how will social valuations be employed?

In the first place, the qualities prized by society become "virtues" and are held to be of intrinsic value. Those qualities by which a people overcomes its enemies and maintains an orderly common life—courage, justice, honesty, fidelity—are conceived as ends in themselves. In all early wisdom they are naïvely compared to gems, jewels, fine gold, king's treasures, or beautiful damsels. Later on they are lifted quite away from ordinary goods and become incomparable "moral values." It is then that qualities become "good" and "bad" instead of merely "good" and "evil." But by so much as our striving away from "evil" exceeds in energy our striving away from the "bad," by so much is control of values to be esteemed above control of moral notions. For the power to award, praise, or dispraise is the power to create good and evil, and the power to create good and evil is the power to guide the choosing of men.

In the second place, those pleasures which are anti-social,

exclusive, collision-provoking, or liable to excess are steadily depreciated. It were a wise leader of the pack who should get them to bay the moon instead of fighting over a bone; for there are not enough bones, but there is enough moon. It is equally politic to divert men from pleasures, such as those connected with sex and property, the pursuit of which endangers social peace. The sexual instinct, for example, is habitually dismissed with slanting allusion and contempt. In all schedules of social values the great motor force of reproduction cuts, indeed, a sorry figure. Then feasting and drinking, orgy and fighting, so naïvely esteemed by natural men, come to be frowned upon. First deemed to be sinful, then abominable, they are finally declared to be evils and not goods. In this way the animal eager to eat, drink, mate, and fight seems to get metamorphosed into a creature of fine tastes and noble aims. And yet these crude pleasures bulk so largely in the concern of men as they are that we cannot regard the low appraisal everywhere openly put upon them as a mere consensus of opinion. It is the valuation of society acting under the instinct of self-preservation. It resembles that conventional distinction between clean and unclean in the flesh of animals which has become sacrosanct to most of us.

In the third place, society "appreciates" the safe pleasures—those, like companionship, converse, or sport, which are *coöperative*; those, like the enjoyment of nature or music or works of art, which are *inexclusive*; those, like health or beauty or humor or knowledge or personal excellence, which *can be expanded without limit and without clash* with others; those which, being *ideal*, do not wastefully consume strength and life. The appetites and passions would tear society to pieces. But the longing for these pleasures but confirms and perfects men in their association. A luring of the individual in this direction by high appraisals is, therefore, as valid a method of social control as the terrifying thunders of a Sinai.

Quite of themselves men come to covet the conditions of physical well-being. It is chiefly in their attitude toward non-

physical goods that the influence of others is decisive. The more life escapes from the creature-needs, the more it obeys the movements of the social baton. Control by valuations is, therefore, a late development, being most effective in the era of a diffused economic surplus, leisure, and a high standard of living. Then only will the finger post pointing to home, social pleasure, knowledge, and contemplation be heeded.

The conspiracy of occidental philosophy, ethics, and literature to exalt peace as opposed to ambition, striving, or activity is a striking example of social valuation. It is certainly not individual valuation. The dry rot of a race which manifests itself in a shrinking from strong emotions, a distaste for strenuous effort, and a love of tranquil existence, is by no means so far advanced with us as the prevailing tone would suggest. There are, of course, overspanned wills that turn gladly to quiet, meditation, and faint emotions. The cloister compensates for the camp, and the peace of the hermit atones for the stress of affairs. But the note of quietism that sounds like a minor chord throughout the art and faith of the most striving, pushing, overcoming people of history, the English race, is not the mere expression of individual feeling. The accent is put on "tranquility" "serenity," "quiet and freedom of spirit," "inward calm," "still and quiet conscience," because the group instinctively seeks to blunt the greed, ambition, and enterprise of its members. So that the quietism running through our religion testifies, not to the weakness of desire, but to its excessive and dangerous strength. What irony in the spectacle of men banding themselves into a society for upholding the worth of detachment and spiritual serenity, while driven each by some passion, low or high—greed, love, ambition, rivalry, the spirit of enterprise, or the zeal for activity!

That the valuations we are bred to are not generally valid for the individual is shown by the way they are affected by experience. The frequent and oft-deplored deflection from the noble idealism of youth, and the growth of sordiness as the years bring wisdom, betray the fact that we are trained to high-keyed

social appraisals of things. This lament is heard only in modern societies, where the youth is carefully inoculated with a set of notions intended to civilize and socialize him. With a people like Uzbeks or Afghans, that have developed no such subtle and pervasive means of control, it is the young men with their passions and willfulness that endanger the social order, and it is the old men who safeguard it.

IV.

In this century we have listened to thinkers who deny that society needs to concern itself with the control of its members. Dispensing with the sanctions of religion, the authority of moral ideas, and the compulsion of law, they point to democratic progress as the natural cure for moral ills. Let free course be given to the improvement of technique, the diffusion of light, and the spread of new tastes. In the evolution of desires among an intelligent people, coupled with the means of satisfying them, lies a better guarantee for order than jails and churches, Scriptures and Sunday schools. Led by these ideas a considerable party makes "Enlightenment," "Progress," "Liberal Thought" the watchwords, not only for the increase of happiness, but, as well, for moral advance.

These ideas have a seeming justification in the undoubted fact that the great democratic diffusions of prosperity have been attended by an upward development of wants. But this is not due to the mysterious law that "the satisfaction of any want gives rise to a new want of a higher order than the want whose place it takes,"¹ but to the fact that the conservative forces of society preside over valuations and consequently over the direction of desires. The mere multiplication of wants is no guarantee of moral progress. The instinct is sound that regards luxury as a spur in the flanks of egoism and not a curb. Far too often has there been an evolution of wants that the social spirit was powerless to control. Undoubtedly with the growing passion for the sweets of philosophy, poetry, music, games, and drama,

¹ BLAIR, *Human Progress*, p. 168.

there went on, for a while, an ennobling and refining of Greek character. But certainly in 60 A. D. the hope of the classic world lay not in the new desires that, fostered by the world's riches flung into the lap of Rome, were rapidly undermining the old simplicity, but in the little ascetic communities in the back streets of Ephesus and Philippi.

The unsuspected influence of conventional values is shown by the fate of the Humanists. The Humanist enjoyed release from authority, as does the man of today. But, so great was the disruption of ideas at his time, he was steadied by no such long-elaborated system of values as shapes the choices of the modern man. Consequently his attitude toward life was inadmissible, and he fell into ill-odor and contempt. With his craving for praise, appreciation of the sensuous, contempt of a quiet life, scorn of domesticity, neglect of character, enthusiasm for ancient learning, worship of success, and apotheosis of genius, he made sad shipwreck. Such men could not be tolerated, and their free and unconventional valuation of life came justly to be regarded as a dangerous distemper.

The new methods in mission work testify to the possibility of altering character by influencing valuations. To the old-time missionary, seeking to save souls by changing the heathen's religious beliefs and worships, succeeds a teacher and civilizer, striving to develop in his flock an appreciation of clothing, cleanliness, privacy, order, property, domestic affection, and family unity, the elementary goods of the white man. And it is this patient guidance of backward peoples along the path by which the civilized races have reached their present elevation that bids fair to bear fruit both abundant and lasting. The lightning process of converting, baptizing, and veneering with a thin layer of morality makes the docile neophyte whose character collapses the moment the supporting hand is withdrawn. Such was the work of the Jesuits in California and Paraguay, in China and Japan, and such has been too much of the mission work of this century. The patient fostering of new wants and imparting of new standards of appreciation produce results less

brilliant, but far more enduring. A like change of method is taking place in the inner missions and social settlements dealing with the "cellars" and "swamps" of modern society.

The uplifting of the American negro is another field for the method of control by social valuations. It is now recognized that not churches alone will lift the race; not even schools; not even contact with the whites. But all of these coöperating with the wider means secured by efficient industry can do it. The growth of new wants, presided over by intelligence and culture, is the best lever for raising the status of the idle, quarreling, sensual, ravishing Afro-American. Certainly the infecting of the backward portion of the race with a high estimate of cleanliness, neatness, family privacy, domestic comfort, and literacy is an agent quite as moralizing as the dread of future punishments or the love of an ethical God.

The songs, ballads, proverbs, and tales that well up from the heart of the folk are instinct with a frank delight in meat and drink, in hues and sounds, in revel and song, in love and war, in freedom and danger. The native literature of Arab or Cossack or Magyar pictures his reigning pleasures with a naïve veracity which startles while it charms the modern man. But when culture ceases to be local and *volksthümlich* and becomes national and central, this fidelity to fact and life is lost, and it becomes a wheel in the moral administration of society. Singer or sage may not thrive, save as he kotows to the notions that assist in moral government. In the country and the backwoods, in isolated rural communities and mountain settlements, the acknowledged inculcated estimates are shrewd and practical and racy of the soil. Here the values taught to sons and daughters spring most directly from the lives and experiences of the people, and, while lacking in the high-pitched idealism we find in the tideways of culture, do really rule the choices of those who profess them. But when this indigenous culture dies out, and each community becomes dependent on a national literature, art, philosophy, or religion, no longer rooted in popular life, the valuations it receives and supports drift ever farther from reality.

This rift that opens between profession and performance, the nominal and the real, what we recommend to our neighbors and what we adopt for ourselves, we cannot escape. It is the price we pay for using gentle, inobvious forms of control. We cannot manage men by social suggestions, ideals, or valuations, unless these are *above* them. For sincerity and frankness let one betake himself to Kabyles or Bedouins. Genuineness is not for a society that prefers to maintain its social order by sweet seduction rather than by rude force.

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